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de Valk, H.A.G.; Liefbroer, A.C.

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HELGA A. G. DE VALK  
*Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute*

AART C. LIEFBROER  
*Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute, and  
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam\**

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# Timing Preferences for Women's Family-Life Transitions: Intergenerational Transmission Among Migrants and Dutch

*This study examines the transmission of preferences regarding the timing of family-life transitions of women among migrant and native Dutch families. We study how and to what extent parental preferences, migrant origin, and family characteristics affect the child's timing preferences. We use parent and child data (N = 1,290) from the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (2002, 2003) and the Social Position and Provisions Ethnic Minorities Survey (2002). Regression analyses reveal that parental timing preferences regarding family-life transitions are strongly associated with the timing preferences of their children. Analyses also show that these preferences strongly vary by migrant origin, educational level, and religious involvement. The process of intergenerational transmission, however, is found to be very similar among migrants and Dutch.*

An extensive literature shows the importance of intergenerational transmission of family-related attitudes. Parents are known to influence, among other things, sexual attitudes (Thornton & Camburn, 1987), family formation attitudes (Axinn & Thornton, 1993; Trent & South, 1992), attitudes toward divorce (Amato, 1996), attitudes regarding fertility (Barber, 2001; Musick, 2002), and gender attitudes (Cunningham, 2001; Moen, Erickson, & Dempster-McClain, 1997). Parental socialization is identified as a key mechanism through which intergenerational consistency in attitudes and preferences occurs (Acock & Bengtson, 1980; Glass, Bengtson, & Dunham, 1986; Starrels & Holm, 2000; Thomson, 1992). Although intergenerational transmission is well documented for native (White) families, much less is known about the intergenerational transmission process among immigrants and their children from non-Western countries (hereafter called migrant families) (for exceptions, see Blee & Tickamyer, 1995; Hogan & Kitagawa, 1985). This is unfortunate for several reasons. First, the population in many Western countries includes substantial numbers of migrant families. Increasing our understanding of the factors that predict the formation of preferences among adolescent children with different migrant backgrounds is even more important, as a growing share of

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Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute, Lange Houtstraat 19, 2511 CV The Hague, The Netherlands (valk@nidi.nl).

\*Department of Social Research Methodology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, De Boelelaan 1081, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

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children making the transition to adulthood will have a migrant background. Second, it is unclear whether intergenerational transmission of preferences is equally strong and operates in the same way among migrant families as among the native population. A specific feature of socialization in migrant families is that first-generation parents have mainly been brought up with the norms and preferences predominant in their countries of origin. Often, the norms and preferences that are dominant in the country of origin of migrants contrast with those predominant in the country of destination. As a result, migrant children are exposed both to parental preferences regarding family formation and to preferences prevalent in the country of settlement during their formative years at school and with peers (Nauck, 2001). It is largely unknown what implications this has for the strength of intergenerational transmission.

This article explores intergenerational transmission of preferences for the timing of transitions in the family-life domain. Leaving the parental home, getting married, and having children constitute important transitions in the life course of many young adults (Heckhausen, 1999; Jansen & Liefbroer, 2001). We examine how and to what extent migrant and Dutch parents influence their children's preferred timing of these three transitions. Studying the preferred timing of family-life transitions is important because preferences are found to have a major influence on future family formation choices, which has clear consequences for young adults (Barber, Axinn, & Thornton, 2002; Hogan, 1986; Settersten, 1997). Early home leaving and teenage pregnancies in particular are often associated with negative individual and social consequences. The timing of family formation can have negative or positive effects on educational attainment, labor force participation, relationship stability, and well-being (Furstenberg, Levine, & Brooks-Gunn, 1990; Kahn & Anderson, 1992). Tracing the mechanisms that lead to specific timing preferences of family-life transitions is thus highly relevant.

Our study, furthermore, focuses on women. The role of women in Western societies has changed quite dramatically since the 1960s. Women's educational attainment and labor force participation have increased (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005), resulting in postponement of major family-life transitions. Although parallel changes occur in many non-Western countries,

most family-related transitions still occur earlier, and stronger norms on the timing of these transitions exist in non-Western countries (Nauck, 2002; Oropesa, 1996). An important reason for this is that women's behavior in the family domain relates to the honor and reputation of the whole family (East, 1998; Goodwin, 1999; Manning & Landale, 1996). Differences in timing preferences between migrants and natives may thus be more pronounced for women.

This study contributes to our understanding of intergenerational transmission by paying specific attention to preferences of migrant parents and their children with regard to the timing of a number of major events in the family-life domain. We do so by using data that include substantial numbers of Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese, Antillean, and Dutch parent-child dyads. These data provide a unique possibility to study migrant families in more detail. The importance of intergenerational transmission of timing preferences among migrant and Dutch children is assessed, and the conditions under which intergenerational influence is stronger or weaker are analyzed. In addition, mechanisms of parental socialization among Dutch and migrants are compared, and it is determined whether and how these mechanisms vary according to migrant background. Before presenting the hypotheses and results, we provide insight in the migrant groups under study as well as a background on family-life transitions among migrants and Dutch.

#### MIGRATION HISTORY AND MIGRANTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Around 19% of the total 16.3 million inhabitants of the Netherlands are born abroad or have at least one parent who is born abroad. Those with a migrant origin are more or less equally divided between Western and non-Western countries of origin (Statistics Netherlands, 2005). This study focuses on four of the largest migrant groups in the Netherlands: Surinamese, Antilleans, Moroccans, and Turks. Together, they compose 67% of the non-Western migrant population in the Netherlands in 2005 (Statistics Netherlands).

Historically, three major types of migration to the Netherlands can be distinguished: migration from former Dutch colonies (e.g., Indonesia and Suriname), labor migration (e.g., Turks and Moroccans), and asylum migration. Although the size of the latter group of migrants has increased significantly in the 1990s, they still

constitute a relatively small proportion of residing migrants and include a wide variety of backgrounds. In addition, asylum migrants are mainly first-generation migrants with young children, making a comparison of timing preferences between parents and young adults impossible. The situation is clearly different for Surinamese, Antilleans, Turks, and Moroccans. For the first time since their settlement in the Netherlands, these migrant populations include substantial numbers of young adults. All four migrant groups have a younger age structure than the Dutch: 17% of the Dutch population is between 15 and 30 years of age, whereas among the four migrant groups this percentage varies between 25% and 30%.

Today, the majority of young Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands are children of the (predominantly male) migrant workers who were recruited in the 1960s to carry out unskilled labor in the Netherlands. The majority of these migrants originated from rural areas in Turkey and Morocco (e.g., the Er Rif region). They not only migrated to the large cities in the west but also went to live in industrial areas in the southern and eastern parts of the Netherlands. Although their stay was originally expected to be temporary, most of them settled in the Netherlands permanently, and family members who initially stayed behind joined them later. Today, many Turks and Moroccans still find a partner in their countries of origin (De Valk, Liefbroer, Esvelde, & Henkens, 2004). The majority of Turks and Moroccans adhere to Islam (Phalet & van Praag, 2004).

Because of their recruitment as unskilled laborers, first-generation Turks and Moroccans are predominantly low educated and have limited Dutch language proficiency. As a result of the economic recession in the 1980s and their physically taxing work, many Turks and Moroccans have become dependent on state-provided unemployment and disability benefits. Although the position of the second generation is improving, Turkish and Moroccan migrants still have a low socioeconomic status in the Netherlands (Odé & Veenman, 2003). Due to their (perceived) socioeconomic, cultural, and religious characteristics, Dutch public opinion regarding Turks and Moroccans, in particular Moroccan youth, in the Netherlands is rather negative (Hagendoorn & Pepels, 2003).

Migration from Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles to the Netherlands stems from the colo-

nial history between the Netherlands and these countries. Surinamese society includes a wide variety of ethnic groups with Creoles and Hindus being the two major ones. Traditionally, migrants from Suriname and the Antilles came to the Netherlands for educational purposes. Furthermore, a substantial number of Surinamese migrated to the Netherlands around the independence of Suriname in 1975. Until 1980, Surinamese kept Dutch nationality and could thus easily settle in the Netherlands without residence permits. Because the Antilles is still part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, migration is relatively easy. In recent years, limited job opportunities in the Antilles made many young Antilleans decide to migrate to the Netherlands. The socioeconomic position of Surinamese and Antilleans is more diverse and in general better than that of Turks and Moroccans. Their Dutch language proficiency is good, they reach higher educational levels, and both men and women more often have paid work (Odé & Veenman, 2003). Among Surinamese, a diversity of religions is found: Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity. Antilleans mainly identify themselves as Christians. Interethnic contact between Dutch and Surinamese is frequent, and public opinion toward Surinamese is generally more positive compared to other migrant groups (Hagendoorn & Pepels, 2003). Antillean youth are generally associated with criminal activities and have a rather negative stigma in Dutch society, resulting in ongoing debates regarding criteria for entrance and residence in the Netherlands.

#### FAMILY-LIFE TRANSITIONS AMONG MIGRANTS AND DUTCH

As in many Western industrialized countries, patterns of family formation and timing of family-life transitions have changed considerably in the Netherlands in the past decades. Paths into adulthood are delayed both in the family domain and with respect to economic independence (Furstenberg, Rumbaut, & Settersten, 2005; Jansen & Liefbroer, 2001). Marriage and childbearing have been postponed, and unmarried cohabitation and living alone have become more common. Whereas up until the 1960s, leaving home and marriage often coincided, today most young adults live by themselves or cohabit with their partner for a certain period (Jansen & Liefbroer). The timing of family-life transitions for women in the Netherlands is characterized

by a young age at leaving the parental home ( $M = 22$  years; Statistics Netherlands, 2005), a late age at first marriage ( $M = 29$  years; Statistics Netherlands), and a very late mean age at first birth ( $M = 29$  years; Statistics Netherlands).

Changes in timing and sequencing of family-life transitions have taken place within the changing sociostructural and cultural context of Dutch society. The Netherlands is today characterized as an individualized and secularized society (Inglehart, 1997; Lesthaeghe, 2002). This implies a strong emphasis on the importance of autonomous decision making. Individual considerations (own preferences and readiness), rather than familial or religious concerns, are supposed to be the main determinants of the timing of transitions into adulthood (Arnett, 1995).

Despite the fact that in Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, and the Antilles, family-life transitions have also changed, processes and mechanisms of leaving home, marriage, and childbearing in these countries differ from those in the Netherlands (Lesthaeghe, 1996; Nauck, 2002; Todd, 1985). A fundamental characteristic distinguishing these societies is the role assigned to the individual. Whereas Dutch society stresses the importance of individual autonomy and independence in making family-related choices, Caribbean and Mediterranean societies emphasize family obligation (Kagitcibasi, 1994, 2005). In Turkish and Moroccan societies, parents traditionally arrange a marriage partner for their child, resulting in relatively young ages at marriage because there is no need to wait until the person has found a marriage partner (Nauck, 2002). Young adults in general do not leave the parental home before marriage, and after marriage, the young couple moves in with the husband's parents. These patterns are, of course, susceptible to change, and young Turks and Moroccans are reported to look for ways to choose their own partners without rejecting the part played by their parents (Hooghiemstra, 2001; Wakil, Siddique, & Wakil, 1981). Despite shifts in the process of partner selection, however, marriage is still the dominant living arrangement among Turks and Moroccans. These patterns of family formation in their home countries are also reflected to some extent in the demographic behavior of Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands. Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands marry at a younger age than Dutch young adults; the ages at first marriage for women in these three groups were 23, 24, and 28 years, respectively, in the period

1995 – 1999 (De Valk et al., 2004). Furthermore, Turkish and Moroccan women are relatively young at first birth (respectively, 24 and 25 years in the 1995 – 1999 period; De Valk et al.). Families often encourage a young couple to have children shortly after they get married because great importance is attached to the continuation of the family line.

In Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles, women play a central role in family relations and traditions, described as the matrifocal Caribbean family system (Shaw, 2003). Women are often the head of household as their (male) partners are not or only partly present. In these Caribbean countries, different alternative partner arrangements exist, and entry into parenthood is a much more important life transition than entry into marriage. Unmarried cohabitation and giving birth out of wedlock are thus very common. Single-mother families are relatively common, and women often combine motherhood and paid work (Distelbrink, 2000). In the Netherlands, too, only a small percentage of women from Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles marry, and those who do so, marry relatively late (29 and 30 years, respectively, in the period 1995 – 1999; De Valk et al., 2004). The age at childbearing among Surinamese and Antillean women is lower than that among Dutch women but higher than that among Moroccans and Turks. The age at first birth is around 26 years for Antillean women and 28 years for Surinamese women.

Given these differences in demographic and cultural backgrounds between the Netherlands and the countries of origin of many migrants, our focus is on differences in demographic preferences between migrant and native young adults in Dutch society. Attention is paid to intergroup and intragroup diversity among Dutch and the migrant population as well (Elder, 1994).

## HYPOTHESES

### *Migrant Background*

Previous studies have found that ideas about the appropriate timing and sequencing of family-life transitions vary between ethnic and racial groups. Whereas White American adolescents, for example, have a preference for motherhood after marriage, childbearing before marriage is not perceived to be unwanted among Black Americans (East, 1998; Hogan, 1986; Oropesa, 1996). Also in the Netherlands, ethnic diversity in

preferences of young adults with regard to the age at which women should leave home, marry, and enter into motherhood is expected given existing ethnic differences in the actual timing of these events and the importance attached to autonomy. In the previous section, it was reported that marriage and motherhood occur earlier among Turks and Moroccans and to a lesser extent among Antilleans and Surinamese in the Netherlands than among native Dutch. We expect that the preferences of young adults will at least partly reflect these existing ethnic differences in the timing of these events. Less is known about the timing of leaving home. In the previous section, however, we suggested that generally the native Dutch strongly value autonomy. Therefore, attaining (residential) independence from parents can be considered to be a key transition among native Dutch young adults. It was also suggested that autonomy is a less central value among most migrants. If so, attaining residential independence may be less important to adolescents with a migrant background than to native Dutch, leading to a higher preferred age at leaving home among the former than among the latter. Our first hypothesis summarizes these expected ethnic differences in the preferred timing of family-life events during young adulthood:

H1: Children with a migrant background prefer older ages for leaving the parental home and younger ages for marriage and childbearing than native Dutch children.

Socialization theories emphasize the importance of parents in the socialization of children (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Younnis & Smollar, 1985). We focus on two aspects of parental socialization that have been found to be of major influence on children's preferences: (a) direct transmission of parental timing preferences and (b) cultural and socioeconomic characteristics of the parental home (Starrels & Holm, 2000).

### *Parental Timing Preferences*

According to socialization theory, children perceive and internalize parental expectations and attitudes. Studies on several aspects of family formation and fertility attitudes show similarities in parent's and children's attitudes and preferences (e.g., Acock & Bengtson, 1980; Glass et al., 1986; Thornton & Camburn, 1987). Furthermore, parental attitudes are found to have a direct influence on their children's preferences and

behavior (Axinn, Clarkberg, & Thornton, 1994; Axinn & Thornton, 1993; Barber et al., 2002). Transmission of preferences from parent to child is likely to be particularly strong with respect to issues that parents find important. Timing choices made in the family domain have a long-lasting effect on the child's life course, affecting, for example, their life chances, educational attainment, and labor market participation (Furstenberg et al., 1990; Kahn & Anderson, 1992). Parents thus have a strong interest in influencing their children's preferences and subsequent behavior regarding the timing of such family-life transitions. The centrality of family formation in the future plans of adolescents motivates the following hypothesis:

H2: Parental timing preferences have a direct positive effect on the child's timing preferences for leaving the parental home, marriage, and childbearing.

This hypothesis suggests that, in general, some level of intergenerational transmission is expected both among native Dutch and among migrants. It remains unclear, however, whether parental influences on the child's timing preferences are equally strong for all ethnic groups. The migration literature suggests two competing hypotheses on the influence of migrant parents. One line of research suggests that migration results in the strengthening of family ties. In addition to being an important coping resource in a new society, families provide continuity with the past (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002; Goodwin, 1999; Pels & Nijsten, 2003). Because family systems of Surinamese, Antilleans, Moroccans, and Turks stress the importance of mutual dependence and respect for older family members, these values tend to be particularly important after migration.

According to another line of reasoning found in the migration literature, however, migration disrupts existing family relations and leads to changes in parent-child relations (Goodwin, 1999; Nauck, 2001; Phaet & Schönpflug, 2001). In the society of settlement, migrants will be exposed to different preferences regarding family life. This will be particularly true for migrant children, given their participation in and exposure to school, peer groups, and the media (Oropesa & Landale, 2004; Pyke, 2005). In these circumstances, intergenerational transmission of timing preferences is no longer self-evident, and

parental influence is assumed to be weaker. This leads to two competing hypotheses on the strength of intergenerational transmission in migrant families compared to Dutch families:

H3a: The intergenerational transmission of timing preferences will be stronger among migrants than among Dutch.

H3b: The intergenerational transmission of timing preferences will be weaker among migrants than among Dutch.

### *Cultural and Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Parental Home*

According to the literature, differences in life course timing preferences are also related to cultural and socioeconomic characteristics of the parents, more particularly their religiousness and level of education (East, 1998; Marini, 1984; Nauck, 2001). Various studies show that parental religiousness has an effect on the family formation attitudes of children (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1993; Oppenheimer, 1988; Thornton & Camburn, 1987). Religious persons are found to have more traditional and strict precepts toward family life and the timing of these transitions. Several studies, however, indicate that it is not so much religious affiliation but rather religious involvement and participation that result in more traditional family formation values and behavior (Alwin, 1986; Jansen & Liefbroer, 2001; Thornton, Axinn, & Hill, 1992). Phalet and van Praag (2004) draw similar conclusions for young Muslims of Turkish and Moroccan descent in the Netherlands who by majority identify themselves as being Muslim but show considerable variation in their religious practices. This suggests that the embeddedness in a religious environment, as a result of religious involvement, leads to transmission of more restrictive family-life preferences.

Parental educational attainment is another factor that might influence the timing preferences of their children. Children from higher educated families tend to leave the parental home at younger ages to acquire an education (Mulder & Clark, 2000). It is, furthermore, known that the more educated are front-runners when it comes to new forms of relationships and delay of childbearing (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1993). Children with more educated parents can thus be expected to prefer a relatively early age at leaving home and a relatively late age at marriage and parenthood.

If parental educational attainment and religious involvement influence the timing preferences of young adults solely or mostly because these variables act as proxies for parental preferences, it can be expected that they will not be important in this study, given that parental preferences are measured directly. We expect, however, that parental educational attainment and religious involvement also say something about the broader social network in which the child grows up and thus may have a direct effect on the child's timing preferences even after inclusion of parental timing preferences. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis is as follows:

H4: Children whose parents (a) are religiously involved and (b) are less educated prefer an older age for leaving the parental home and younger ages for marriage and childbearing than children whose parents are not religiously involved and whose parents are more educated.

Beside parental characteristics, individual child characteristics may influence the timing preferences of young adults. Because women generally leave home earlier and marry younger than men, we compare preferences of men and women in our analyses (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005). The child's age is included in the analyses because young adults may adjust their preferences when growing older. Finally, migrant generation of the child is taken into account: Compared to first generation, second-generation youth grow up in and are generally more focused on the country of settlement (Pyke, 2005).

## METHOD

### *Data*

We analyzed data from the main sample of the 2002/2003 Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS Wave 1) and the 2002 Social Position and Provisions Ethnic Minorities Survey (SPVA). The NKPS is a national representative sample of about 8,000 Dutch respondents (Dykstra et al., 2005). It is a random (address) sample of individuals aged 18 – 79 years within private households in the Netherlands. Potential respondents were approached by the interviewer either in person or by phone. The main respondent was interviewed in a computer-assisted personal interview supplemented with self-completion questionnaires. Up to five family members (partner, one parent, one sibling, and two children) of

this main respondent both in and outside the household were asked to complete a self-completion questionnaire. The NKPS had an overall response rate of 47%, which is about average for surveys in the Netherlands (for details, see Dykstra et al.; Stoop, 2005).

Additionally, we used the SPVA that includes 4,100 migrants with a Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, or Antillean background. This survey sampled heads of households from the population registers of the 13 municipalities in the Netherlands in which half the migrants from the four migrant groups live (Groeneveld & Weijers-Martens, 2003). These heads of household were approached at home by an interviewer with the same ethnic background. The interview followed a structured questionnaire that was available in Turkish, Arabic, or Dutch. Respondents could indicate their language preference. In addition to this main interview with the head of household, the partner and children aged 12 years and older who lived in the same household were asked to fill in a short self-completion questionnaire. Themes included in these questionnaires ranged from demographic background, educational trajectories, work history, religion, and opinions on a range of topics. The response rate of the SPVA was 52% among Turks and Moroccans, 51% among Antilleans, and 44% among Surinamese. This response rate is in line with previous waves in 1998 and 1994 and other surveys in the Netherlands (for more details, see Groeneveld & Weijers-Martens; Stoop, 2005).

As a result of cooperation between the NKPS and the SPVA, many questions were posed in both surveys, resulting in availability of data on migrants and Dutch and allowing for meaningful comparisons between groups. Both surveys allow comparison of parents and children living in the same household. Our analyses required that information was available on the age preferences of both parent and child. We selected respondents who had at least one child aged between 15 and 30 years living in the parental home at the time of interview. Information on one of the parents and a randomly chosen child who met the above-mentioned criteria was included in the analyses. After selection, the data included 661 Dutch, 250 Turkish, 173 Moroccan, 132 Surinamese, and 74 Antillean parent-child dyads.

It is difficult to assess the representativity of the data on these dyads, given that censuses have not been taken in the Netherlands since 1970.

A limited comparison, however, with other data sets that contain information on migrant populations can be made regarding educational attainment and religious involvement (SCP, WODC, & CBS, 2005). In the 2004 Labor Force Survey, almost the same ranking of the five groups on educational attainment as in our study (cf. Table 1) was observed, with Turks and Moroccans being less well educated than Surinamese and Dutch having the highest level of education. The only difference between the two studies concerned the position of the Antilleans, who are somewhat less well educated in our study than in the Labor Force Survey. The ranking of the five groups with regard to religious involvement can be compared to data from a recent survey on the living conditions of ethnic minorities. Again, the ranking in our survey corresponds to that in this living conditions survey, with Turks and Moroccans showing the highest level of religious involvement, followed by Antilleans and Surinamese, and the Dutch showing the lowest level of religious involvement. The correspondence between these rankings from different surveys suggests no strong biases in our data.

### *Measures*

*Dependent variables.* The three dependent variables are the child's preferred age for a woman to experience family-life transitions. Respondents were asked "What do you consider a good age for a woman to (a) leave the parental home, (b) marry a partner and (c) have a first child?" Non-response to these questions was between 1% and 4% for migrant children, Antilleans having the highest nonresponse on all three items. Non-response among Dutch varied between 8% (preferred age at leaving home) and 11% (preferred age at marriage). Difference in nonresponse between the Dutch and the migrant groups can be attributed to the fact that among migrants the interviewer was present until completion of all the questionnaires. Dutch respondents could return the self-completion questionnaires to the interviewer at a later time. A second reason for the lower nonresponse rate among migrants could be that migrant respondents have more clear age preferences than Dutch respondents for family-life transitions.

*Independent variables.* Descriptive information on the measures is given in Table 1.



Table 1. *Description of Independent Variables by (Migrant) Group, M (SD)*

Independent Variables	Range	Dutch	Turks	Moroccans	Surinamese	Antilleans
		<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Parental level of education <sup>a</sup>	1 – 3	1.89 (0.85)	1.28 (0.60)	1.01 (0.42)	1.42 (0.75)	1.22 (0.51)
Parental religious involvement <sup>b</sup>	1 – 4	1.81 (1.00)	2.95 (1.11)	3.14 (1.14)	2.13 (0.95)	2.47 (1.14)
Gender of the child <sup>c</sup>	0 – 1	0.49 (0.50)	0.50 (0.50)	0.54 (0.50)	0.55 (0.50)	0.54 (0.50)
Age of the child (in years)	15 – 30	18.9 (3.15)	18.2 (3.05)	18.2 (3.28)	18.9 (3.40)	18.8 (3.07)
Migrant generation of the child <sup>d</sup>	0 – 1	Not applicable	0.17 (0.37)	0.22 (0.42)	0.23 (0.45)	0.45 (0.50)
<i>n</i>		661	250	173	132	74

Note: Source—The Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (2002/2003) and Social Position and Provisions Ethnic Minorities Survey (2002).

<sup>a</sup>1 = *low* – 3 = *high*. <sup>b</sup>1 = *never* – 4 = *at least once a week*. <sup>c</sup>1 = *woman*. <sup>d</sup>1 = *second generation*.

**Parental Age Preferences.** The questions on preferred ages at major life course transitions posed to children were posed to parents as well. The parents' preferred ages for a woman to leave the parental home, marry a partner, and have a first child were included in the analyses as a continuous variable. Nonresponse on these three items was comparable to that among children. Nonresponding parents were assigned the mean preferred age for their ethnic group. To examine whether the parents who did not indicate a specific age preference differed from those who did, a separate dummy variable was included for the former.

**Migrant Background.** Children born in Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, or the Netherlands Antilles or having at least one parent born in these countries were defined as migrants and assigned to one of the four migrant groups. Following the rules used by Statistics Netherlands (2005), children of mixed marriages (4% of the migrant respondents) were classified according to the country of birth of their mother, unless their mother was born in the Netherlands. In the latter case, the country of birth of their father was used in determining migrant background.

**Parental Religious Involvement.** Parents were asked "How often do you currently attend church or religious services?" Answers ranged from 1 = *never*, 2 = *several times a year*, 3 = *several times a month*, to 4 = *once a week or more often*.

**Parental Level of Education.** The highest level of education completed with a diploma, either abroad or in the Netherlands, was included in the analyses. If the certificate was received from a school abroad, the respondents were asked to indicate how it is compared to educational levels in the Netherlands. The answers were recoded into three categories: 1 = *low* (lower vocational education, lower general secondary education, or lower), 2 = *medium* (intermediate vocational education), and 3 = *high* (upper general secondary education, higher vocational education, or university).

We controlled for possible confounding factors by including gender of the child (dummy variable, men reference category), age of the child (continuous variable), and migrant generation of the child (dummy variable, born abroad/first-generation reference category). We also tested for parental age and gender in our models. No effects, however, were found, and these last two variables were omitted from the analyses.

### Method

First, a descriptive analysis is presented of the preferences of parent and child regarding the appropriate age for a woman to leave home, marry, and have a first child. The mean ages and standard deviations are calculated, and differences between mean group preferences are tested using post hoc multigroup comparisons (least significant difference). Second, the correlation

between parental and children's timing preferences is computed for each (migrant) group. Correlations found among the four migrant groups are compared to those found among Dutch using a Fisher  $z$  test. Finally, ordinary least squares regression is used to study the effect of parent characteristics on their children's timing preferences. For each timing preference, three models are presented. The Model 1 contains parental preferences, characteristics of the parental home, and control variables. This model allows testing of Hypothesis 2 on the strength of intergenerational transmission of timing preferences. In Model 2, ethnic background and whether the child is a first- or second-generation migrant are included in the analysis. This model allows the testing of Hypothesis 1 on differences in timing preferences between Dutch and members of different migrant groups. Finally, in Model 3 interactions between parental preferences and ethnic group are added. This model allows testing alternative Hypothesis 3a and Hypothesis 3b on differences in the strength of intergenerational transmission between ethnic groups and Hypothesis 4 on the direct effect of parental religious involvement and parental educational attainment.

## RESULTS

### *Preferred Ages for Transitions*

In Table 2, timing preferences of children and parents are presented for each ethnic group. From this table, it can be concluded that, within each

ethnic group, parents generally prefer older ages for leaving home and younger ages for marriage and childbearing than children. The mean preferred age to leave the parental home was in the early 20s among all groups. Among the children's generation, Antilleans stated the youngest age ( $M = 20.3$  years), whereas Moroccans showed the oldest age ( $M = 21.6$  years) for a woman to leave the parental home. Among parents, those of Surinamese origin stated the oldest age ( $M = 22.6$  years) for a woman to leave the parental home and Turkish and Dutch the youngest age (both  $M = 21.1$  years). Regarding the mean preferred ages at marriage, we found a dichotomy (particularly among children) between Turks and Moroccans on the one hand and Surinamese, Antillean, and Dutch on the other. Whereas the preferred age at marriage among Turks and Moroccans was in the early 20s, the other groups gave mid-20s as the preferred age for women to marry. With respect to parenthood, we found a clear distinction between Dutch and the four migrant groups. Dutch parents and children had a clear preference for the oldest ages for women at childbirth ( $M = 26.9$  and  $27.2$  years, respectively). Again, Moroccan parents and children were in favor of the youngest ages for women to experience this transition ( $M = 23.3$  and  $24.8$  years, respectively).

We are interested not only in the mean ages preferred by parents and children but also in the extent to which timing preferences for family transitions of women differ between individuals within a particular (migrant) group. Table 2 gives the standard deviation as an indicator of the

Table 2. Means of Preferred Ages for Three Life Course Transitions of Women, by (Migrant) Group

	Preferred Age for a Woman to:					
	Leave the Parental Home		Get Married		Have a First Child	
	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Parent	Child
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Turks	21.1 <sub>a</sub> (2.03)	21.5 <sub>a</sub> (2.34)	22.1 <sub>a</sub> (2.09)	22.9 <sub>a</sub> (2.35)	24.6 <sub>a</sub> (2.28)	25.5 <sub>a</sub> (2.57)
Moroccans	21.3 <sub>a</sub> (2.34)	21.6 <sub>a</sub> (2.43)	21.4 <sub>b</sub> (2.51)	22.6 <sub>a</sub> (2.45)	23.3 <sub>b</sub> (2.56)	24.8 <sub>b</sub> (2.49)
Surinamese	22.6 <sub>b</sub> (3.98)	21.3 <sub>a</sub> (2.48)	24.3 <sub>c</sub> (2.76)	24.7 <sub>b</sub> (3.50)	25.3 <sub>c</sub> (2.98)	25.5 <sub>a,c</sub> (3.11)
Antilleans	21.5 <sub>a</sub> (2.31)	20.3 <sub>b</sub> (1.79)	24.3 <sub>c,d</sub> (2.85)	25.4 <sub>b,c</sub> (3.41)	25.2 <sub>a,c</sub> (2.90)	25.1 <sub>a,b,c</sub> (3.18)
Dutch	21.1 <sub>a</sub> (2.02)	20.8 <sub>b</sub> (2.44)	24.7 <sub>d</sub> (2.61)	25.9 <sub>c</sub> (3.31)	26.9 <sub>d</sub> (2.56)	27.2 <sub>d</sub> (2.97)

Note: Means in the same column that do not share subscripts differ at  $p < .05$  in the multiple comparison least significant difference test.  $n = 661$  Dutch, 250 Turkish, 173 Moroccan, 132 Surinamese, and 74 Antillean parent-child dyads. Source—The Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (2002/2003) and Social Position and Provisions Ethnic Minorities Survey (2002).

variation in preferred ages per group. To test for differences in variation of age preferences among migrant groups and Dutch, we performed a Levene's test for equality of variance (not in Table). The timing preference for women to leave the parental home has a lower variance among Dutch and Turkish parents than among the other three groups. For the other two family-life transitions, no difference in variance was found among parents. Children of all migrant groups showed homogeneity of variance with Dutch regarding the preferred home-leaving age of women. Less variation in preferred age for marriage and childbearing, however, was found among the Turkish and Moroccan children compared with the other groups.

#### *Parent-Child Similarity*

To obtain a first impression of parent-child similarities in timing preferences, we computed the percentage of parent-child dyads mentioning either the same age or an age that deviated at most 1 year from each other (not in Table). For the migrant groups, we found that around 40% of parents and children prefer (almost) the same age for a woman to leave the parental home. For the Dutch population, the level of agreement on the timing of leaving the parental home was somewhat higher (50%). Regarding the preferred age for a woman at marriage, we also found around 40% agreement between migrant parents and children. For Dutch, however, the agreement on age at marriage was lower (30%). With respect to the preferred ages for women at childbearing, around 44% of the Turkish, Surinamese, and Antillean parents and children more or less agreed on this point. Agreement is the case for around 36% of Moroccan and Dutch parents and children.

Parent-child similarity in timing preferences was further analyzed by computing the correlation between the parent's and child's preferred age for a woman to experience a transition. To test for significant differences in parent-child correlation between Dutch and the four migrant groups, we performed a Fisher  $z$  test, defined as:  $r_1 - r_2 / [(1/N_1 - 3) + (1/N_2 - 3)]$ . We thus compared the correlation found within each separate migrant group with that of Dutch.

On the whole, the correlation found between parent and child preferences was significant with one exception (all at  $p < .01$  level). In general, Moroccan parents and children showed the highest and Dutch the lowest correlation for all

three transitions. The highest correlation among Dutch parents and children was found for the preferred age at leaving the parental home ( $r = .35$ ). This correlation does not differ significantly from that found among any of the migrant groups (Turks  $r = .25$ , Moroccans  $r = .41$ , Surinamese  $r = .25$ , and Antilleans  $r = .29$ ). For the women's preferred age at marriage, correlation between preferences of Turkish, Moroccan, and Antillean parents and children was stronger ( $r = .40$ ,  $r = .55$ , and  $r = .49$ , respectively) than that among the Dutch ( $r = .23$ ). The correlation between Surinamese parents and children ( $r = .34$ ) did not differ significantly from that among Dutch dyads. Finally, regarding childbearing, only the Moroccan parent-child correlation ( $r = .46$ ) was found to differ significantly from that found for Dutch parent-child dyads ( $r = .27$ ).

#### *Intergenerational Transmission*

The multivariate analyses focus on how parental timing preferences, migrant background, and other characteristics of the parental home affect the child's preferred age for a woman to experience a specific family-life transition. Results of hierarchical OLS regression analyses predicting the child's preferred ages for a woman to leave the parental home, marry, and have a first child are presented in Tables 3 through 5.

Table 3 shows the results for the child's preferred age for a woman to leave the parental home. In Model 1, parental preferences, characteristics of the parental home, and control variables are included. The parental age preference has the expected effect on the child's age preference. Children whose parents prefer women to leave the parental home at an older age, themselves also prefer older ages for this transition. (No evidence was found that parents who did not respond to the question on preferred age differ from those who did.) This finding is in line with Hypothesis 2. In line with Hypothesis 4, both parental level of education and parental religious involvement influence the timing preference of their children. Children's preferred age for a woman to leave home is higher, the higher educated and the less religiously involved their parents are. In addition, the preferred age at leaving home increases with children's age.

Migrant background is introduced in Model 2. As expected (Hypothesis 1), Turks and Moroccans prefer older ages for leaving the parental

Table 3. *Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Child's Preferred Age for a Woman to Leave the Parental Home*

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Intercept	13.26***	0.70	12.65***	0.70	11.60***	1.05
Parental level of education	-0.25***	0.08	-0.14	0.09	-0.12	0.09
Parental religious involvement	0.12*	0.06	0.00	0.06	0.01	0.06
Gender of child	-0.02	0.13	0.00	0.13	-0.01	0.13
Age of child	0.14***	0.02	0.16***	0.02	0.15***	0.02
Parental preference	0.25***	0.03	0.26***	0.03	0.31***	0.05
Parental preference missing	0.20	0.28	0.21	0.27	0.21	0.27
Turkish			0.82***	0.19	1.49	1.75
Moroccan			0.82***	0.22	-0.36	1.80
Surinamese			-0.01	0.23	3.61**	1.50
Antillean			-0.60*	0.29	2.20	2.49
First-generation child			-0.14	0.21	-0.10	0.21
Turkish $\times$ Parental preference					-0.03	0.08
Moroccan $\times$ Parental preference					0.06	0.08
Surinamese $\times$ Parental preference					-0.16**	0.07
Antillean $\times$ Parental preference					-0.13	0.12
$R^2$	.14		.17		.18	
$F$ for change in $R^2$	42.88***		8.27***		2.36*	

Note:  $N = 1,158$  parent-child dyads. Source—The Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (2002/2003) and Social Position and Provisions Ethnic Minorities Survey (2002).

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

home. No significant differences are found, however, between the Surinamese and Dutch. Moreover, for Antilleans, the effect is contrary to Hypothesis 1: Antillean youngsters prefer younger ages than their Dutch compatriots for a woman to leave the parental home.

Inclusion of interactions between migrant background and parental age preference (Model 3) reveals a weaker effect of parental age preference for leaving home on the child's preferences among Surinamese. For the Surinamese, we thus find support for Hypothesis 3b, according to which the age preferences of migrant parents have less effect than those of Dutch. Parental influence among Turks, Moroccans, and Antilleans does not differ from that among Dutch families, however. In addition, parental education is no longer significant in Model 3, suggesting that its initial effect was overestimated because it captured some of the differences between ethnic groups.

The second analysis focuses on the child's preferred age for a woman to marry. Results of the OLS regression are presented in Table 4. Model 1 again includes characteristics of the parents and

control variables. Results indicate that parental age preferences have a direct influence on the child's timing preference. The older the preferred age for marriage of the parent, the older the preferred marriage age of the child, which is in line with Hypothesis 2. Parental level of education and parental religious involvement both have a substantial effect on the child's age preference. Whereas children with more highly educated parents prefer a later age at marriage, children whose parents are more religiously involved prefer younger ages for women to marry. Both findings are in line with Hypothesis 4. Of the individual control variables, only age has an effect on the child's timing preference for marriage.

The direct effect of parental age preference becomes weaker when migrant background is entered (Model 2). Inclusion of migrant background reveals that all migrant groups, except Antilleans, prefer a younger age at marriage than the native Dutch. This finding largely confirms Hypothesis 1 that expected younger marriage age preferences among migrant children. No differences in timing preferences for marriages between first- and second-generation migrants

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Child's Preferred Age for a Woman to Marry

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Intercept	12.54***	0.95	15.10**	1.03	17.24***	1.30
Parental level of education	0.57***	0.11	0.37***	0.12	0.39***	0.12
Parental religious involvement	-0.43***	0.08	-0.29***	0.08	-0.28***	0.08
Gender of child	-0.09	0.17	-0.12	0.17	-0.11	0.17
Age of child	0.13***	0.03	0.11***	0.03	0.11***	0.03
Parental preference	0.42***	0.03	0.35***	0.03	0.27***	0.05
Parental preference missing	0.16	0.37	-0.10	0.36	-0.10	0.36
Turkish			-1.58***	0.26	-4.86*	2.28
Moroccan			-1.43***	0.30	-6.13**	2.21
Surinamese			-0.93***	0.30	-3.31	2.60
Antillean			-0.07	0.39	-7.21**	3.04
First-generation child			0.22	0.28	0.24	0.29
Turkish $\times$ Parental preference					0.14	0.10
Moroccan $\times$ Parental preference					0.21*	0.10
Surinamese $\times$ Parental preference					0.10	0.11
Antillean $\times$ Parental preference					0.29**	0.12
$R^2$	.27		.29		.30	
$F$ for change in $R^2$	85.36***		9.09***		2.24*	

Note:  $N = 1,147$  parent-child dyads. Source—The Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (2002/2003) and Social Position and Provisions Ethnic Minorities Survey (2002).

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

are observed. In Model 2, the direct effects of parental level of education and parental religious involvement become weaker, suggesting that part of the effects initially ascribed to level of education and religious involvement in fact results from ethnic differences rather than from educational or religious ones.

Inclusion of the interaction effects between migrant background and parental age preferences in Model 3 indicates that age preferences of Moroccan and Antillean parents are having a larger effect on their children's preferences than those of Dutch parents. Hypothesis 3a, which states that migrant parents have a stronger influence than parents of Dutch descent, is thus confirmed for these two migrant groups only. The results show that compared with Dutch, the influence of parental age preference is neither stronger (Hypothesis 3a) nor weaker (Hypothesis 3b) among Surinamese and Turks.

The final analysis focuses on the effects of intergenerational transmission on the child's preferred age for a woman to have a first child (Table 5). The results in Model 1 show that parents' age preference significantly affects the preferred age of the child, which is in line with

Hypothesis 2. Parental level of education and parental religious involvement are also found to have the expected effect on children's age preferences for childbearing. As hypothesized (Hypothesis 4), a lower level of education and greater religious involvement of parents result in younger preferred ages for women at childbearing. In addition, a positive effect of the child's age is observed.

Entering migrant background in Model 2 reveals that all migrant children except those of Turkish descent prefer younger ages for childbearing than Dutch children, thus in general supporting Hypothesis 1. No differences in age preferences between first- and second-generation migrants are found. Finally, the results in Model 3 show that, contrary to Hypothesis 3a and Hypothesis 3b, suggesting stronger or weaker parental effects, no differences in parental influence were found among migrant groups compared with Dutch.

## DISCUSSION

This study explored timing preferences for life course transitions among migrant and Dutch

Table 5. *Hierarchical Regression Coefficients for Child's Preferred Age for a Woman to Have a First Child*

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Intercept	15.16***	0.92	16.27***	0.99	17.87***	1.33
Parental level of education	0.50***	0.11	0.38***	0.11	0.39***	0.11
Parental religious involvement	-0.23**	0.07	-0.18*	0.08	-0.18*	0.08
Gender of child	-0.04	0.16	-0.02	0.16	-0.03	0.16
Age of child	0.09***	0.03	0.09**	0.03	0.08***	0.03
Parental preference	0.36***	0.03	0.33***	0.03	0.27***	0.04
Parental preference missing	-0.51	0.36	-0.63	0.36	-0.64	0.36
Turkish			-0.40	0.24	-2.97	2.23
Moroccan			-0.56**	0.29	-3.88	2.26
Surinamese			-0.92**	0.28	-2.88	2.42
Antillean			-1.12**	0.36	-5.41	3.01
First-generation child			-0.09	0.27	-0.04	0.27
Turkish $\times$ Parental preference					0.10	0.09
Moroccan $\times$ Parental preference					0.13	0.09
Surinamese $\times$ Parental preference					0.07	0.09
Antillean $\times$ Parental preference					0.17	0.12
$R^2$	.21		.22		.23	
$F$ for change in $R^2$	74.12***		3.87**		0.99	

Note:  $N = 1,155$  parent-child dyads. Source—The Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (2002/2003) and Social Position and Provisions Ethnic Minorities Survey (2002).

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

families. Four hypotheses on ethnic differences in timing preferences and on the transmission of these preferences within families were formulated and tested. In line with our first hypothesis, clear ethnic differences in timing preferences were observed. Turkish and Moroccan young adults tend to prefer somewhat older ages for women to leave the parental home and much younger ages for women's marriage and entry into motherhood. The differences in timing preferences between native Dutch young adults and young adults of Surinamese and Antillean descent are smaller for leaving home and marriage, but still in the expected direction. Ethnic differences are particularly pronounced for entry into motherhood. These findings mirror the differences in actual behavior observed between these ethnic groups. Although ages at marriage and at first birth have risen since the early 1990s among migrant women in Dutch society, they still experience these transitions at younger ages than native women. At the same time, children in all ethnic groups favor a later age at marriage and entry into motherhood than their parents. This suggests that the ideational shift to delayed commitment to family roles that has been

observed among the native population in Western societies (Lesthaeghe, 2002) is also occurring among migrants.

Intergenerational transmission of timing preferences turned out to be strong. Our hypothesis that parents transmit their own age preferences to their children is supported for all three preferences and for all groups. Parental preferences have a substantial effect on their children's preferences, in particular on preferences regarding the timing of women's marriage and entry into motherhood. Intergenerational transmission is somewhat weaker for the preferred age for women to leave the parental home. This pattern suggests that both migrant and Dutch parents are more concerned about the child's family formation choices than about the age at leaving home. The latter may be viewed as resulting from decisions made in other life domains, such as education, work, and family formation.

Another important finding is that the strength of intergenerational transmission of timing preferences does not fundamentally differ between migrants and Dutch. According to existing research, two contrasting hypotheses on the differences in the strength of intergenerational

transmission were formulated, but neither received much empirical support. Apparently, children within all ethnic groups deal in more or less the same way with partially divergent opinions from their families and from other socializing agents (e.g., Hooghiemstra, 2001; Wakil et al., 1981). At the same time, a few ethnic differences were found. Intergenerational transmission of the timing preference regarding leaving the parental home was weaker among Surinamese, and transmission of the timing preference concerning marriage was stronger among Moroccans and Antilleans than among native Dutch. These results do not suggest a clear pattern and thus are hard to interpret.

In line with our fourth hypothesis, we find that preferences of young adults concerning the timing of leaving home, marriage, and parenthood vary according to the educational and religious backgrounds of their parents. Children from highly educated families and children from non-religious families prefer to postpone marriage and parenthood compared to children from families with little educational attainment and strong religious involvement. This pattern suggests that the influence of the parental home on the preferences of children is not restricted to the direct transmission of specific preferences but that the broader social networks within which families are embedded are important as well. In other words, parental influence on timing preferences results not only from value socialization but also from status inheritance (Glass et al., 1986).

These results have a number of implications for our understanding of ethnic differences in intergenerational transmission. First, although clear ethnic differences in timing preferences were observed, few differences in the strength of intergenerational transmission between migrant native Dutch families were found. This suggests that processes of intergenerational transmission may be operating in basically the same manner in all ethnic groups, and one should be careful in assuming that intergenerational transmission is inherently more or less problematic in migrant families. Second, timing preferences varied considerably between migrant groups, and a few ethnic differences in the strength of intergenerational transmission of timing preferences were observed. This suggests that one should not juxtapose migrants and natives but should pay attention to the variety of cultural backgrounds among migrants and how this influences their preferences and behaviors. Third, our

analysis showed that children's timing preferences varied by the preferences and the level of education and religious involvement of their parents. Evidently, these factors vary not only between ethnic groups but also within ethnic groups. Therefore, even though timing preferences vary between ethnic groups, there will still be considerable intraethnic variation in preferences as well.

Finally, some limitations of this study should be mentioned. First, this study is limited to timing preferences. Relatively little is known about the actual timing and sequencing of family-life events among migrants and how this is related to parental attitudes and behavior. Therefore, more insight into the actual transition into adulthood among migrant children and the role played by their parents and family would be valuable. Second, this study focuses on preferences toward the timing of family-life transitions for *women* only. Paying attention to the preferences with regard to the timing of these events in men's lives could provide additional indications for changes in family formation preferences. Third, this article studies the influence of the parental home only. It is also well known that peer groups are important socializing agents for children. Future research should try to enlarge the scope by including peer group and broader family relations. Finally, future work should address transitions in different domains of the migrant adolescents' life. Preferences regarding family-life transitions are not formed in a vacuum but are clearly related to other life course transitions as well as the social context in which the child grows up.

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